

September 2007

Safeguarding

Introduction: Mission & Safeguarding

I have long said that safeguarding is essential to the mission and credibility of the Church, but what do I mean by this? In many respects it comes out of observation of areas of the wider Church that have suffered hugely from damaged reputation and credibility as a result of acute safeguarding issues and at times through mishandling and serious harm done. Nevertheless, I don't want to start comparing church denominations. All those working in this field nationally feel that they are all in this together. What happens in one part of the Church affects us all. The Church of Christ is damaged when we get don't get responses to abuse and harm right and the public generally do not distinguish between one denomination and another.

The more I do this work the more I discover people on the margins of the Church, or people marginalised within the Church, who might otherwise be more welcome, more included, feel more as though the Church is for them if we take safeguarding seriously. In addition, there are those people who say they have been abused within or by the Church who leave the Church, or people who leave because

of poor handling of these issues, either survivors of abuse or sometimes those who have committed some harm and are not enabled to be part of the Church anywhere. Every time these things are on the agenda of a church council, someone who is a survivor of abuse will be watching and hoping that we get it right. Every time we respond well to a situation where a hurting child, young person or adult is in need of being heard and believed, we will be furthering the love of God, the gospel of Christ.

Finally, there is a priority in the gospels by Jesus for those who are hurt, abused and marginalised. There are obviously special friendships or ministry with women, children, people who are unclean and outcasts. There is Jesus' conversation and willingness to be challenged on theology by a woman whom he asked for water and who had many partners. There is the moment Jesus highlights a child as important to the kingdom and even as an example of the meaning of the kingdom of God. We may even glimpse God, through the perspective of a child. Children may even minister the love of God to us.

Jesus goes so far as to condemn those who would cause a child to stumble.

For me the key to the truth of God's incarnational presence is found in vulnerability and powerlessness. In this way grace reaches all aspects of human life and experience, even those of suffering and darkness. No one illustrates this more vividly than a child; in Jesus' day, when they were wholly marginalised and worthless. I have tried to express the grace of our incarnational God in a child through the poem on page 5.

The prevention of abuse and harm is key. Children are vital to Church, and valuable to God, as are all people. So safeguarding is a vital part of life both in the church and the wider community. Safeguarding awareness and implementing good practice help to promote a safer church for both adults and children, but it may never be an entirely 'risk-free church'. It should rather be a place where all can discover faith, explore what this means and grow to fullness of life with confidence and safe from harm.

Revd Pearl Luxon

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Creating Safer Space

The report 'Creating Safer Space' was adopted by the recent Methodist Conference in July. It is the title of a Connexional training framework for Safeguarding throughout the Church. 'Safe from Harm', the 1993 Home Office guidance, states as one of 13 principles that voluntary organisations should 'Train paid staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.'

A Safeguarding training audit was undertaken across the Connexion in 2005 and a number of problems were identified alongside a good deal of effort and good work. Nevertheless, the gaps in provision and attendance at training were very concerning. The implications of the problematic findings of the audit were potentially very serious for promoting the safeguarding and welfare of children. The provision of and participation in any training by those working with children and those with pastoral responsibility is vital.

The Connexional training framework will build on existing good practice with ecumenical and other partners; be a flexible approach and use a variety of training methods; affirm previous learning in the Methodist Church and elsewhere; require minimum standards for all those with responsibilities in the Church; deliver it as locally as appropriate; greatly reduce the potential for mishandling child protection issues and any negative consequences for those concerned.

Over the years the Methodist Church has become a 'flagship' among the churches in regard to Safeguarding. The Methodist Church has credibility in this work that it is essential to maintain and build upon.

The objectives of the framework are to:

- Establish approved minimum standards of training in Safeguarding
- Establish a common Connexional approach to Safeguarding training
- Show how Safeguarding training relates to required training for children's and youth work in the Methodist Church
- Achieve a wider take-up and wider participation
- Produce a resource of materials that can be widely used and adapted for all parts of the Church's life
- Achieve a flexible framework of standards, objectives and modules in order to adapt to new developments and achieve ecumenical training wherever possible.
- Help to establish good practice in ecumenical training
- Enable regular updating and appraisal of current training in the light of new legislation and Government guidance
- Ensure that training is delivered by those authorised and trained to deliver

The Connexional Safeguarding training framework will help to enhance and consolidate a good deal of good work that is already taking place in many districts. It will strengthen the many volunteers involved in Safeguarding already and

provide the whole Methodist Church with a better sense of the proper balance between the bureaucracy of recruitment procedures and checks (which has been overly dominant during the last three years, but is essential) and the greater work of Safeguarding which is about a greater awareness and promoting good practice within the whole Church.

The whole Church suffers when people in the churches suffer, not least the children. It is therefore a whole Church responsibility that the safeguarding and welfare of children is of prime importance. It is vital to the health of church life that all those who are involved with the church understand both the importance of Safeguarding for their own church community, no matter how few children there are, or even if there are none. It is also vital for church growth that there is a basis for activities, for both children and adults (many of whom may have experienced abuse) which is safe and in which all can play a full part in church life and grow in faith together safely.

The report 'Tracing Rainbows' (Methodist Conference 2006) concluded that 'a community that has taken time to consider how to become safer for survivors is likely to be safer for everyone.' We would dearly like this to become a reality and commend the Connexional Safeguarding training framework as a significant step toward achieving this.

The full report is available on the Methodist web site – www.methodist.org.uk

A Reflection

Love God
Love your neighbour
Love yourself
On these things hang all the law and the teaching about God.
Love God
Love your neighbour
Love yourself

On these things hang all good practice and the best pastoral care.
Love God
Love your neighbour
Love yourself
This is the work of a lifetime; this is the heart of Christian discipleship.

Michaela Youngson

From a new Pastoral Care resource 'Encircled in Care' - currently being devised.

A Survey on sex offenders policy – key points

The Methodist Conference in 2000 adopted a report entitled 'The Church and Sex Offenders'. The report sets out some information on sexual offending against children, it offered some theological reflection on the issues and put in place the structures and policies that the Methodist Church has been working with ever since with regard to sex offenders and the Church.

The policy on those who have offended in a sexual way toward children and adults is not one which seeks to deny the power of Christ to change lives. Rather it is a practical approach to a problem of behaviour that is known to often be addictive and which is hard to treat, and to a community where we must protect those people (children and adults) who may still be at risk. In doing so we provide in the procedures a system of pastoral support and monitoring which is for the benefit of the person who has offended or has had serious allegations made about them.

Someone who has behaved in these ways may have been either formally cautioned, self-identified or referred by another agency and may be part of or come into a local church. The report sets out the

importance of a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approach that includes the Church and considers situations from pre-release, to setting up a small group in the local church, risk assessment, the formation of a contract and confidentiality.

The Standing Orders to cover this area were introduced in 2001, and are outlined in Section 69 and the guidance section of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD) of the Methodist Church.

The time had come for a review of the procedures, but not merely from a study and institutional perspective but more so from a practical approach that looked at people's experiences of using the procedures. It is from this understanding that the report as it stands has grown.

362 completed Sex Offender Surveys were returned. These have been analysed and the data compiled can be found in the report. There was a good return – from the whole Connexion. Although we weren't guaranteed to get the questionnaire to every minister, the returns we did get represent well over 10% of all active ministers.

The survey highlighted the need for greater clarity on the guidance given, especially over cases where a person is still deemed to be a risk, but has not been to court or has been found not guilty of a criminal offence. In particular, it should be highlighted that it is not good practice for one person to provide pastoral support both to a victim and an offender in the same church community. The circuit structure can be a great asset in such cases. Further, there needs to be more training, especially for ministers, and a recognition of the considerable demands of working with people who have abused children or adults. The needs are also for better support and supervision for those in this work, whether they are volunteers, office holders or ministers.

Those in the Connexional Team and districts concerned with implementing Safeguarding now need to act upon the recommendations, and where resources, for example in training, or professional support and supervision are needed, these need to be found. Further work will be done on this (a copy is available from Pearl Luxon safeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk).

CAS News... CAS News...



The Churches' Agency
for Safeguarding

www.churchsafe.org.uk

CAS no longer has a backlog! We now process all forms within five working days.

Since the introduction of the £5 error charge in April, we have resolved over 65% of all errors and omissions by phone. Telephone **0207 467 5216** for queries.

UPCOMING CHANGES

CAS is expanding! We are now looking for Christian groups and organisations that need CRB checks for staff and volunteers. If you know of any groups etc please contact us on **0207 467 5189**.

DON'T FORGET...

From September 1 2007, all cheques sent to CAS for CRB fees (for paid staff only, but not Methodist ministers and deacons) should be made payable to the 'Churches' Agency for Safeguarding'.

A Poem

The hug of a child

*In the hug of a child,
A sweet innocent, tight hold,
Is peace.*

*In the hug of a child,
An eager, responsive kiss,
Is joy.*

*In the hug of a child,
A smile of their face, responding,
Is bliss.*

*In the hug of a child,
No stress, complication, or worries,
Is renewal.*

*In the hug of a child,
A small being, giving all, dependent,
Is restoration.*

*In the hug of a child,
A moment of unity, parent-child,
Together.*

*In the hug of a child,
Encountering essence of God's love
For us.*

*In the hug of a child,
Our Godhead represented as a
Little child.*

*In the hug of a child,
Incarnational reality, God present
In weakness.*

*In the hug of a child,
Encountering powerlessness,
God's presence.*

*In the hug of a child,
A ministering angel,
meets us rejoicing,
And heals.*

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Time for Action, Tracing Rainbows reports and Pastoral Care – **planned follow up**

Last year there was talk of a DVD and leaflet to help promote the needs for awareness of survivors of sexual abuse in our church community. Unfortunately, these are still being developed and it is taking longer than anticipated. Nevertheless, we are intending to publish several resources for this area of concern and a leaflet and DVD will be produced during the next Connexional year.

Michaela Youngson is also producing a new pastoral care pack entitled 'Encircled in care' and this will provide a valuable base for awareness and consideration of many related topics including the needs of survivors and other vulnerable people.



Methodist Resources

Previously covered topics/issues – where to find them

- ⊙ **Pastoral Care and Safeguarding – considering good practice with adults who are or may be vulnerable – September 2005**
Written jointly by Michaela Youngson and Pearl Luxon, this has been a popular Link bulletin and is still available on www.methodist.org.uk under Information, Safeguarding and Resources
- ⊙ **CAS Verifiers guidance – May 2006**
Although soon to be updated, this is a very comprehensive guide – also to be found on www.methodist.org.uk – same route.
The updated guidance for CAS verifiers will be found on www.churchsafe.org.uk

Essential Resources

Churches' Agency for Safeguarding

Processes Disclosures for Methodist Church and 10 other denominations

- CRB (England and Wales) and CRBS (Scotland) procedures are explained on www.churchsafe.org.uk This process is run by the Churches' Agency for Safeguarding (CAS) on behalf of the Methodist Church and 10 other denominations.
- **CRB/CRBS Forms packs** are available from MPH @ £1 each per form pack ref: PE240 England and Wales, PE242 Scotland.
- Methodist policy with these recruitment vetting procedures for lay people and ministers are outlined on the Methodist website www.methodist.org.uk in **Recruitment in the Methodist Church** and **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQ's)

The Church and Sex Offenders Report 2000

Adopted by the Methodist Conference in June 2000 (MPH Reference: PA146 @£1.75)

'Safeguarding'

A policy for good practice in the care of children and young people – Methodist Church 2003 (MPH reference: PE235 @£2.50)

'Worth Doing Well' revised 2002

A handbook for children and youth work (MPH reference: PE603 @£12.50)

'Playing to Learn'

This handbook is aimed at churches taking responsibility for the provision of childcare on their premises but will also be of interest to those letting their premises to outside organisations for this purpose. (MPH Reference: PE161 @£2.50)

Safeguarding Link Mailing Earlier editions

Bulletins March 2004 and November 2004, September 2005 and March 2006 – also on the MC website www.methodist.org.uk

'Time for Action'

Sexual abuse, the Churches and a new dawn for survivors (CTBI reference: CT140 from MPH @ £7.95)

Where to go for help

When you need advice or assistance

- ⊙ Every circuit (or church in Scotland) should have a designated person who advises and provides information on Methodist policy
- ⊙ Your district will have Safeguarding/Taking Care reps who may be contacted directly, via the Training and Development Officer or in some cases the District Office.

The Revd Pearl Luxon

Safeguarding Adviser (Children and Vulnerable Adults), The Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England
Tel: 020 7467 5189

Verena Thim

P.A. to Safeguarding Adviser (Children and Vulnerable Adults)
Tel: 020 7467 5189

Methodist Church Safeguarding e-mail enquires safeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk

Methodist Church of Great Britain website www.methodist.org.uk

Useful websites

www.stopitnow.org.uk
www.lucyfaithfull.org
www.nspcc.org.uk
www.kidsmart.org.uk
www.nchaf.org.uk
www.barnardos.org.uk
www.childline.org.uk

This bulletin should be kept by your Safeguarding book for reference

Further Information



Please contact Pearl Luxon, Safeguarding Adviser (children and adult protection), Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR
Tel: 020 7467 5189 Fax: 020 7467 3763

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This is part of *Methodist Connexions*, the Connexional Link pack provided for the Methodist Church in Britain. Methodist Churches and others in linked ecumenical projects may freely copy this resource for their own use.

Who else in your church might find this useful?

Ministers
Deacons
Lay workers
Church council secretaries
Children and youth workers

Please write their names and get them to tick the box when they have seen or received a copy.

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